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## Fall Again

by [Lycoriseum](#)

### Summary

Pharah acts rashly during a mission and Mercy pays the price. She recovers, but something important is still missing.

# Doctor, Who?

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

*I'm sorry.*

It was a messy battle. It happened too fast. She had flown after the group of Talon operatives with Mercy in tow, healing staff closing the scratches on her face as she zeroed in on the captain. The reticle locked on her target became her red flag, leading her in a mindless charge, instinct drowning out her partner's calls to stop. Why stop? Why, when she was in a dead dive towards the rooftop where her target halted, turning to throw two grenades, filling the air with a combined EMP burst? Pharah's visor went dark, thrusters dead, armour dented and scratched from her collision with rough concrete. She heard metallic scuffles as Mercy fell behind her, but the sight of a wicked grin flooded anger into her being. Her visor relit, Raptora systems starting up again as she ran in a dead charge, arm stretched forward to shoot a concussive blast. *Pharah, stop!* Reticles reappeared on her visor, locating the captain, two snipers, and an extra two with rocket launchers. Pharah's eyes widened, thrusters lit, but not fast enough to avoid the blast radius.

*I'm sorry.*

Her vision surfaced from blackness in time to watch her own launcher fly off the roof. Then she turned her head, the second rocket blast raining debris on her armour, to watch Mercy being propelled off the roof. Her inert yellow silhouette fell, and fell, and fell down her visor until Pharah could see her no more. *Mercy!* Scream tearing through her throat, Pharah jumped off the edge with thrusters burning, only to feel a hard jerk, then concrete slamming against her back. She turned towards the captain and saw the heavy rope in his hands, pulled taut between him and the grappling hook on one of her wings. *No!* Panic and grief roiled through her clouded mind, and Pharah activated her thrusters in a dead charge against the captain. Hand gripping his face, she slammed his head against the wall, over and over, until blood dripped to the floor. The sound of a door slamming open, followed by rapid firing of pulse pistols, and a cockney accent telling her to *get Mercy* stopped her. Warmth draining from her body, Pharah launched herself off the roof, to the white figure lying still on the ground.

*I'm sorry.*

She cut her thrusters too early, almost falling over on unsteady legs, stumbling towards her mistake, her regret, her *fault*. The sight of Mercy's lifeless gaze pointed up at the night sky brought her to her knees. One hand on the ground for support, the other reached out to feel her neck, even though her visor told her Mercy was dead. Dead. No pulse. Blood pooled around the blonde head, life fleeing where death staked its claim. *Mercy!* Deep voice rumbled through the air, black-furred arms entered her field of vision. Pharah looked up, blurred vision of Winston filling her view, watching as he fumbled with the caduceus staff. *Heroes never die*. Rare curses fell from his lips as he made the damaged staff light up, and bent down to activate the Valkyrie's holo-display. *Heroes never die!* Mercy's body was engulfed in golden light, searing a miracle into her open eyes, then vanished to reveal a body renewed, chest rising and falling in tranquil breaths. An insistent hand on her back pushed, as Zarya gathered Mercy in her arms, urging Pharah to run for the extraction before the law or media arrived. They reached the VTOL heaving ragged breaths. Tracer's hand left Pharah as she ran for the cockpit with Winston. Zarya laid Mercy on the floor, brushing errant blonde strands out of her face. Then she walked over to Pharah and pushed her visor up, hand wiping the tears gently off her face. Pharah's eyes never left Mercy as Zarya guided her to sit near the one she watched, for the rest of the journey home.

*I'm sorry.*

Four days later, Angela was still in a coma, and Fareeha was still in a stupor. She had barely left her seat next to the bed, leaving only when mother nature screamed, and when food was thrust into her hands, and when other hands forced her into the neighbouring bed and tucked her in. Agents came and went, some alone and some in twos or threes. All sat beside her to watch over their slumbering guardian angel, to offer words of comfort, to urge Fareeha to take care of herself. If not for her, then for Angela. All of them knew. After months of secrecy, all of them now knew Angela had a lover who did not love her enough.

Fareeha dropped her head into her hands, dry heaves wracking her lungs as the tears did not come. How could they? They were all gone. Shed over hands where blood still stained. Useless hands. Violent hands that knew only how to kill, kill, kill. Hands that shot up at the grip on her shoulder, and pain shot through when it hit an iron-bound arm.

"Good. Your fighting spirit is still intact."

The steady thrum of a Russian accent and the hold on her shoulder anchored her in reality. Fareeha stared up at the calm visage beneath shocking pink hair.

"You will go to your room and rest." Her tone brooked no argument. But Fareeha could not care less.

"No."

"You will rest, or I will knock you out and *make* you rest."

That sent a whip of anger through her. The chair almost toppled over when Fareeha shot out of it, fixing Zarya with a glare to rival that of the Egyptian sun. Her hands balled into fists at the sight of the smile, only the barest remnants of restraint holding her back from punching it off her face.

"You are angry. That is good. But you are angry for the wrong reason." Zarya's voice remained calm, which irked Fareeha even more.

"Then *give* me a good reason." She took a step forward.

"Very well."

The punch blindsided her, sending both numbness and burning pain over her right cheek. Fareeha's vision went dark for a split-second as she stumbled and when she could see again, she found herself bent over Angela's face, with both hands on clean white sheets to steady herself. She tried to stand upright, but a sudden grip on the back of her neck forced her down, closer to Angela. The sight of her peaceful countenance gave Fareeha pause, a familiar mixture of love and guilt welling up in her again.

"You fight to protect the innocent and the weak. Correct?"

Anger and indignation threatened to flare up again, but Fareeha focused on the woman before her. A healing balm for her wounded pride. An anchor in a storm.

"Yes."

"And you fight to protect her. Correct?"

Hands balled into fists, gripping into bed sheets. Her arms started to tremble, and the clamping force on her neck turned supportive, holding her steady.

"Yes." Her voice was softer this time.

"And you failed."

"Yes."

"But you will try again."

"Yes."

"Because failure does not break a warrior. It strengthens her. It reminds her that by fighting harder, she will stop the same from happening again."

Mercy's dead gaze flashed before her eyes, and she screwed them shut. A shaky breath left her lungs and her eyes started growing moist, to her surprise. Then she forced them open, staring back down at Angela. *It will not happen again.*

"Yes."

The weight on her neck lifted. Fareeha wrenched her eyes away from the blonde, slowly straightening her back and turned to her friend. The smile was still on her face, softer now, as was her gaze. Two strong hands clasped her shoulders in approval.

"But you cannot fight while you are weak. Go back to your room and rest," Zarya repeated her instructions. "I will watch over her until you return."

Fareeha turned her head, gazing down at the blonde, caressed by the warm rays of the afternoon sun. She stretched a hand towards her, but dropped it halfway. No. She did not deserve...

"Nothing will happen to her when I am around," Zarya gave her one last reassurance, then pushed her lightly towards the door. When Fareeha made no move on her own, the Russian sighed, taking her by the shoulders and leading her out of med bay.

"I will lock the doors. You will not be allowed to step in here until 8pm," Zarya said, before closing the door.

8pm? That was seven hours away. It would be hard, but...she would make it. Surely. For Angela.

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The moment her head hit the pillows, Fareeha fell into a mini-coma herself. When she woke, bleary-eyed, she discovered that it was 9.13pm. More than one hour past Zarya's curfew. Shock propelled her off the bed, where she stumbled a little, mind still not shaking off its sleepy haze. She leant on the wall for a breather before making her way back to med bay, where Zarya received her with an amused expression. The woman pointed at the small container of food beside Angela's bed – her dinner – and left, clapping her shoulder on the way out. Fareeha resumed her watch, mood lighter now after the much-needed sleep, and the lovely little meal courtesy of Mei. She even started smiling when Winston, Hana, and Lena dropped by for a visit, dodging questions about the livid bruise sitting squarely on her cheekbone.

Now, though, she felt her eyelids drooping again. Winston was reading Angela's favourite poetry book out loud, and the three women were on the brink of falling off their chairs. Angela had read a few poems to her before, and Fareeha thought she actually understood and liked them. Only just now did she realise it was because of Angela's voice.

When Winston finally finished yet another poem, Hana cut in loudly, "Okay, that's enough poetry for tonight!"

*Bless the kid*, Fareeha thought guiltily, sneaking a glance at Winston who nodded with grace and put the book away. *Bless him too*.

Hana walked around the bed so she stood nearer to Angela, peering at her closely.

"Seems like poems are not doing the trick," she said. "Maybe we should just pop open the best bottle of wine and wave it under her nose."

Lena giggled. "She'd probably hit you first for opening her wine, though."

"Yeah, well. At least she'll be awake." Hana scratched her chin, humming thoughtfully. She looked back at Fareeha, brows quirked in that same way they always did before she made mischief. Then she leaned closer towards Angela, until her mouth was near her ear.

"*Angie!*" Hana yelled suddenly, the other three jumping in shock. "*Fareeha kissed Lena!*"

"*What?!*" Lena sputtered, panic written across her features even though Angela was still unconscious, and what Hana yelled was not true.

"*Fareeha's been busy, Angie!*" Hana continued. "*She kissed me too!*"

"*What?!*" It was Fareeha's turn to be outraged.

"*Fareeha's getting married, Angie! And it's not to you!*"

Fareeha grabbed onto the girl, pulling her away from the bed. Disbelief robbed her of words, leaving her staring at Hana in stunned silence. The girl rolled her eyes, shrugging Fareeha's hands away. She turned back to the bed, where Angela still lay motionless.

"Ah well. It was worth a try," Hana sighed. "Maybe we should really try the wine thing—"

"She moved."

Winston sounded like he did not believe himself. The ladies stared at him as he stared wide-eyed at Angela.

"Her fingers!" He rose from the chair, stepping closer to the bed, eyes fixated on Angela's fingers.

The rest of them followed his example, staring intently at slim digits. Then — there it was. Her index finger moved. Once. Twice. Then the rest of her fingers followed suit.

Fareeha looked back up at Angela's face — her eyes were moving beneath her lids. Winston held out the medical scanner, a wide grin on his face as he nodded.

"Yes, she's waking up!" he declared, and they all crowded around the woman, watching as Angela slowly opened her eyes.

God, it seemed like a lifetime ago since Fareeha had looked at those stunning blue eyes. A grin broke out across her face when Angela's gaze landed on her, before roving over to the other agents, and finally coming to a rest on Winston. Her eyes grew wider, then darted back towards Fareeha again. She propped herself up on her elbows, before Fareeha adjusted the bed's inclination, allowing her to sit up without effort. Fareeha placed a gentle hand on the woman's arm, drawing her attention for a short second, before her eyes returned to Winston again. There was a growing mix of confusion and panic on her features.

"You—" She coughed. "Gorilla."

Winston laughed, "Well, at least we know your eyesight is good."

Angela's eyes widened even further. "You can speak?"

Confusion spread from the woman to her companions, who shared uneasy glances. Angela cast her eyes around, looking at the med bay, before returning to the people in front of her again.

"Where am I?"

The four agents froze. Fareeha's heart almost stopped beating when Angela's eyes fell upon her again, without a trace of recognition.

"*Where am I?*" Angela repeated, frightened now, shifting further back in her bed.

"It's alright, love," Lena said, first to recover from the collective shock. "You're in our med bay. You're safe. And that's Winston," she added when she noticed Angela's eyes flitted back to him. "He's our friend. Looks big, actually a real softie."

Winston nodded in agreement.

"Who are you? Why am I here?"

Lena scratched at her forehead, throwing a helpless look at Fareeha. She was still unsettled, like the rest of them.

"We're agents of Overwatch," Fareeha explained, restraining the urge to pull Angela into her arms. "We aim to end conflict in the world. You are one of us. You're in here because you were—" *Dead. You were dead because of me.*

"You were injured," Hana covered her lapse, placing a hand on Fareeha's back. "It was kinda serious. So that's probably why you don't remember us."

Angela frowned, distrust apparent. "How do I know you're not lying to me?"

"Because we're the good guys?" Hana said, like it was the most obvious thing in the world. "Not really our style to keep prisoners or whatever. Right?"

"Right," Lena chipped in, grinning with hands on her hips. "Don't worry, Angie. We'll take care of you."

"Angie?"

"Angela," Fareeha said. "That's your name. Angela—"

"—Ziegler." The word left her lips without thought. "I remember. My name."

Fareeha nodded and sank back into her chair, taking the small relief where she could. She felt Hana's hand on her shoulder, giving a light squeeze. Winston said something about checking things with Athena, and headed into Angela's office. Lena moved her chair next to Fareeha's, clapping her hands.

"Well! Seems like we have a lot to catch you up on. Where would you like to start?"

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According to Athena, there were two contributing factors to Angela's amnesia. One, the caduceus staff was damaged when used to revive Angela. Two, the Valkyrie suit was similarly damaged, its

systems unable to sync with the staff properly. Adding two pieces of damaged equipment together did not equate to full effectiveness. That was why Angela's body was restored, but not her memories. The A.I. also informed them the amnesia was most likely temporary, but it was unknown when Angela would recover. So they should try to jog her memory whenever they could, to accelerate the recovery process.

That was why Fareeha was escorting Angela to the kitchen. It was decided that today would be her last day in med bay, and they would have a party at night to celebrate. Getting to know her colleagues again should be a good start to regaining her memories.

"Everyone will be there?" Angela asked again, looking uncertain.

"Don't worry. They all know you. And they all like you." It was the second time Angela had asked.

"They like who I was."

"You're still you. Don't worry too much, alright? If you get uncomfortable, then we can leave for some peace and quiet." Like the first time Fareeha had escaped a celebration, and ended up in a quiet hang-out with Angela instead. Seemed like the tables had turned.

Angela nodded, stopping when Fareeha placed a hand on her shoulder. Nodding at the closed doors to signal that they had arrived, Fareeha pressed the buzzer. A couple of seconds later, the doors slid open, and a resounding cheer burst through the doorway as confetti and streamers flew out at them. Fareeha glanced to the side, watching the surprise on Angela's face give way to almost child-like wonder at the sight of her friends. Angela smiled as Lena ran towards her in a guerilla hug, then led her by the arm towards the centre of the kitchen. Stepping inside, Fareeha felt the same wonder washing over her. The amount of food on the kitchen counters was incredible, filling the big room with a mish-mash of delicious aromas. She passed an eye over the food, spotting sliders, ribs, spring rolls, sushi, tarts – and were those mini Swiss rolls?

A yank on her jacket lapels forced her eyes away from the food, to level with Hana's grinning face. The girl had purple face paint on, Fareeha noticed, as a party hat was placed on her head. Then her face was sandwiched between two palms.

"Look festive, Captain," Hana said, kneading her cheeks. "You've gotta fit the hat." She patted the edge of Fareeha's slowly fading bruise, then bounced away to Lucio, who was manning the... DJ booth? Where did he get that from?

"Okay, people! Make way!" Jesse yelled from kitchen counter where he had been working.

Lena, who was still latched onto Angela, guided the blonde into the chair at the centre of the table. She gave Jesse a thumbs-up, and the man strode over to the table with a plate of waffles balanced proudly in one hand. He placed it in front of Angela with a flourish, continuing the show by spraying whipped cream on top of the waffles, before decorating the plate with sliced strawberries. It was her favourite dessert from the cowboy's repertoire. She managed to get Jesse to make it for her the very day he arrived.

"The sweetest dessert for the sweetest lady." He took his hat off, pressing it to his chest and sweeping into a very gentlemanly bow.

Angela laughed at the sight. "Dessert? But I haven't even eaten anything else yet!"

"Why leave for later something you can eat now?" Reinhardt boomed.

"I'll bet Fareeha's heard that a thousand times!" Hana yelled from the booth.

Laughter started to ripple through the crowd, but died off noticeably when Angela cocked her head, fixing them with a curious gaze. They turned back to Fareeha, who shook her head as subtly as possible, cheeks burning. She had not told Angela that they were together despite spending the last few days with her, deciding it was not appropriate. The woman had not regained her memories, and Fareeha still had...reservations.

"Fareeha?" Angela asked, eyes falling upon the woman in question.

"I... I am a very big eater. I love to eat. I love to eat a lot." Her words came out in quick succession as the lie wove itself.

"Yeah, the woman's a glutton," Hana took the save and ran with it. "So you'd better eat those up before she stuffs them into her fat mouth!"

Fareeha sighed, resting her chin in a hand, feeling thankful that the attention had switched back to Angela. They watched as she brought the first bite of waffle into her mouth, a palpable tension falling over the room. Angela's face lit up, and Fareeha forgot her troubles.

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As it turned out, Angela's initial worries were for naught. She fit in easily with her not-so-new colleagues, relearning little facts and quirks, basking in the attention being showered on her. Fareeha contented herself with staying by the sides – the blonde surely had enough of her during her time in the med bay. It was endearing to watch Angela interact with the others. There was a noticeable lack of restraint in her actions, her expressions. Without years of war and bloodshed and loss lurking in her subconscious, Angela seemed lighter, more innocent and free. It was... precious. Almost a shame to lose.

The party went on into the early morning until Jack excused himself. Before leaving, he gave Angela a one-armed hug – a gesture of affection that nearly blew their minds. They stared wide-eyed as Jack gave her small smile, then told the others to return to quarters soon. Mei and Genji were the first to take his advice. And then Angela, who nudged Fareeha lightly and asked if she'd like to turn in too. They left the kitchen together, choruses of *'good night'* and *'we'll clean up, don't worry'* echoing after them. Reinhardt's drunken singing could be heard for a good distance before growing inaudible.

"Welcome back to your room," Fareeha said, turning the lights on as Angela followed after her.

"Looks nice." Angela strolled in, looking around. "Is your room like that too?"

"Kind of."

Both women had similar spartan tastes in décor. One from a life spent mostly in field camps and war zones, the other from habit formed in the military. Aside from necessities and choice hobby items, they had little in the way of decorations and trinkets. After they got together, however, both started accumulating little gifts from each other that were dispersed around the room. The sunset-hue scarf Fareeha gave her still hung from a hook on the wall. A deck of cards on the coffee table. A small glass figurine of an angel on the shelf. The *"I'm stupid!"* sticker that Hana dared her to paste on Angela's back, sat at a corner of the study table.

"That is the bathroom, correct?" Angela pointed at the door, smiling at Fareeha's nod. "And this is my wardrobe." She walked over to it, sliding the door open.

Fareeha followed her as she looked over the selection of clothes, running her fingers over a lab coat, a couple of dresses, sweaters, a few t-shirts, pants, and shorts, before finally landing on the



black leather jacket. Eyes widening, Fareeha's heart stopped for a moment before it started up in panic. The jacket was hers, and so were the tank tops and workout shorts behind it.

Angela hummed, taking the hanger with the jacket, holding it up for closer inspection. She ran a hand down soft warm leather, nodding appreciatively. A frown creased her forehead when she held it up against herself, noticing its shoulders were broader than hers. She removed the hanger, slipping her arms through the sleeves, which reached a little over her wrists. Even though it hung a little wide on her lithe frame, a smile spread across her face and she pulled it snug around her. Little did she know she had done the same countless times before.

"I love this jacket," Angela said, pulling the collar to her nose for a sniff. "But it's a little big, don't you think?" She waited for an answer, then looked up to find a stricken face staring back at her. "Fareeha?"

"It's mine," Fareeha forced the words out, her heart squeezing at the confession.

"Oh. Why is your jacket in my room?"

"I... I left it here," she said, hating the way she stammered. But not as much as she hated how she wanted to melt under Angela's penetrative gaze.

"Is there something you want to tell me, Fareeha?"

There was a smile on her lips. *She knew*, Fareeha realised. Or at least, she suspected. Of course. Just because she lost her memories did not mean she lost her perceptiveness as well.

"We were together." She knew better than to lie. Not when Angela had her number.

"That explains why you've barely left my side since I awoke." Blue eyes examined her from head to toe. "And Hana's joke about...your '*appetite*'?"

Fareeha blushed. The girl had actually referred to *Angela's* instead, but this was no time to think about either of their appetites. She nodded, smiling sheepishly.

"Well. At least now I know I have excellent taste."

*Not so excellent*, Fareeha wanted to say. But looking at Angela's mirthful gaze, she thought better of it. No need to ruin her mood.

"It's something we have in common."

Angela matched her blush, and Fareeha felt as if time had been reset, throwing them back to before they started. When discreet gazes and little flirts were all they dared, never putting much stock in something that may have no future.

"Why didn't you say anything?"

"You didn't remember. And I did not want to...distract you."

She cocked an eyebrow. "I don't think this is a distraction I'd mind."

The warmth of Angela's hand on her arm was the most welcome touch she felt all week. She reached up, hesitating a little before holding the slim hand in her own. Fareeha bit down on a trembling lip when Angela's fingers curled around hers, fighting to keep her knees from buckling. Looking back into tender blue eyes, she felt the reaffirmation of her vow.

*I will protect her.*

Reluctantly, Fareeha brought their hands down, and pulled her own away. She jerked a thumb at the door.

"I'll return to my quarters, leave you in peace. My room is only three doors down from yours. So look for me if you need anything, alright?" She pointed at the phone on the study table. "You have my number too. Call me if you need to."

"I will." Angela nodded. Before Fareeha reached the door though, she blurted, "Wait! Don't you want your jacket back?"

Fareeha grabbed onto the lapel, stopping Angela before she could take it off.

"Keep it. It is where it belongs."

It seemed Angela took her words to heart. Fareeha found her still wearing it at breakfast in the morning.

## Chapter End Notes

Can you tell how hard I tried to cling onto angst before I fell back into fluff hell again.

Had this draft for a long time, finally pushed it out. Second chapter's already planned, currently in the works. Will be out hopefully before the weekend.

# Healing

## Chapter Summary

Angela reacquaints herself with life in Overwatch. And they deal with an issue.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Five days had passed since the party. In that time, Angela explored the entirety of the base with Fareeha by her side. They visited Winston's office first, where she was introduced to Athena. Then they revisited past memories by looking through files and articles stored in Winston's computer, and the photos hung over his desk. Doctor Angela Ziegler's accomplishments were numerous and admirable indeed. She read through her own profile, news pieces on her medical breakthroughs, and notable Overwatch missions that she had participated. Winston explained each and every piece of detail patiently, while Angela nodded and listened with a frown. She stared at the photos Winston gave her, face blank when nothing came back. Fareeha gave her a reassuring smile when Angela glanced at her in concern, telling her not to force herself. Winston agreed, urging them to take it easy. The memories would come at their own time.

They went to Mei's office next – it was right beside Winston's. The climatologist talked about when they knew each other, back in the old Overwatch days. Then, when it became apparent they had no luck, she talked about her research and showed Angela her endothermic blaster and weather-modification drone. That sucked her in and both women chatted for a long time, before finally waking Fareeha – who had fallen asleep in her chair – and moving on. Fareeha left her alone with Genji the next day. He had suggested meditation to help clear Angela's mind, remove any mental blocks that prevented her memories' return. But when they met for dinner, Angela informed her that she fell asleep during meditation, and woke up in her own bed properly tucked in. At least she was resting more than she ever did in the previous month.

Fareeha hit the gym after an entire week of inactivity, and decided to bring Angela along. She guided the blonde through her usual workout routine, amused when Angela expressed surprise at being able to perform pull-ups. She literally latched onto the exercise, refusing to do anything else, and it took a little coaxing to pry her off the bar and move onto weights. Angela issued her a weight-lifting challenge which she lost, obviously. Fareeha was the one with the muscles. Which attracted quite a sum of Angela's not-so-subtle attention. Which she subtly tried to ignore and continued with her own routine, while Angela sat at the side and watched. She finished in record time that day.

This morning a team was deployed on a mission, and Fareeha was assigned to the med bay, to be on standby for their return. It was as good a time as any to get the doctor reacquainted with her workplace duties. She brought her to the armoury first, where Angela laid eyes on the Valkyrie suit that she had only seen in pictures thus far. She ran a hand almost reverently over the armour.

"I made this," she said, like she was trying to convince herself of that fact.

"Yes. You said this is one of your best creations."

Angela nodded, eyes never leaving the suit. She frowned. "I...remember flying in it."

It took a second for the words to sink in. Then –

"You remember?" Fareeha asked, trying to contain her excitement.

Angela shook her head, eyes still on the Valkyrie but no longer seeing. Her hands were raised, fingers curled as though holding something. *The staff*, Fareeha realised. The blonde glanced down at the empty space between her hands.

"Only very vaguely," she said slowly, turning her hands up. "I was holding...something? The caduceus staff."

Angela looked up at Fareeha, who nodded eagerly. All that time spent poring over Angela's history was paying off. She quickly closed the Valkyrie storage, placing a hand on Angela's back and guiding her out of the armoury.

"Yes. And we're going to get you reacquainted," Fareeha replied.

She steered Angela back into the all-too-familiar med bay. But this time she brought the blonde deeper, right into her office. Fareeha strode over to the plain steel case next to the large desk as Angela took in her surroundings. She keyed in the code for the case, waiting patiently as its lid slid open, revealing the repaired caduceus staff. Torbjörn had finished with it a mere three days after the mission, while Angela was still unconscious. Fareeha took the staff in her hands, admiring how pristine it looked, courtesy of the Swedish engineer. He held great pride in his work, and it never failed to show. In his hands, her Raptora armour had gone through dozens of repairs and several unconventional upgrades that Helix might have frowned upon. No complaints from Fareeha though, they gave her better maneuverability and power in the battlefield.

Angela came to stand beside her, and Fareeha handed the staff over into waiting hands. The blonde stared at it for a few moments, before testing its weight and balance, turning it this way and that. She took a few steps back, tossing the staff between her hands, giving it a twirl, then throwing it into the air. Fareeha cocked her head, momentary fear for the staff allayed when Angela caught it smoothly during descent. A look of near-disbelief and pride lit up her eyes as she looked back at Fareeha, lips parted in a giddy smile.

"You always did like to do that," Fareeha said, moving closer. It must be muscle memory. She wondered if Angela remembered how to use her pistol as well. Perhaps a trip to the shooting range was in order. But, first things first.

Fareeha held onto the staff, rotating it to reveal the two triggers on its side. "This one activates the healing stream, and this one is the damage boost."

Angela hummed, adjusting her hand so that her fingers rested on both triggers. She pressed each one in succession. First, a blue glow ignited the tip, then gold.

"I was flying after you," she said suddenly. The golden glow faded as she tore her eyes away from the staff. "It was night, and– I was healing you."

Fareeha's heart dropped. Of all the memories to return...

"There was some kind of explosion? And then we fell." She frowned, gazing off into a distance as she tried to remember. "I remember landing on my shoulder. You were in front of me, and there were other people too. But..." Her face scrunched up. "I don't remember anything after that. Are you alright?" she added, noticing Fareeha's stare.

"Yes!" Her reply came like a reflex. "Yes, I'm just...trying to recall what you saw." She took a step back, schooling her features into a placid mask. One look at Angela was enough to tell her

the blonde did not buy it.

"Fareeha—"

The main computer screen suddenly lit up, catching both women by surprise. It was a hail from one of their planes, and Fareeha sent silent thanks to whoever was on the other end of the line. She tapped on the keyboard, accepting the hail to open an audio channel from Tracer.

*"Calling Acting Doctor Amari. Come in, Doctor Amari!"* Tracer sounded upbeat. That was a good sign. Fareeha could hear Winston in the background reminding her to use their call signs.

"Yes, Tracer. Wounded?"

*"Just a few scratches: 76 and Mackie. And Winston sprained his big toe, didn't you, Winnie?"*

Winnie grumbled.

"You should've brought Lucio along."

*"Yeah, well. Complain to 76 later. ETA 9 minutes. Tracer, out."*

The transmission ended, and the screen blinked off again. Fareeha turned back to Angela, who was still holding onto the staff with a questioning gaze. She forced a smile, gesturing towards the med bay.

"Time to work your magic, Doctor."

Angela nodded, mirroring her expression. "With your guidance, Acting Doctor."

---

Her distaste for violence resurfaced the moment her hands closed around the caduceus blaster. Angela held the pistol in her hands, lips pursed with a faraway look in her eyes. It was something she had been doing more often recently, going still while she searched through elusive memories, to find the reason for an emotional reaction she did not understand just yet. Hopefully this was because the memories were now closer, within grasping distance. Hopefully.

Fareeha placed an armoured hand on her shoulder, leaning back to avoid being smacked by the Valkyrie wings when Angela turned. She waved away the apology, asking if Angela was ready. They were in the outdoor training range usually used for team exercises, but Fareeha wanted the open space for a bout of flying later. Angela expressed desire to go airborne in her Valkyrie suit, and Fareeha herself did miss soaring through the skies. Might as well fulfill two wishes at the same time. Right now, though, they had to get less enjoyable business out of the way.

"Do you remember how to use it?" Fareeha asked, tapping on the control console to spawn a holo target.

"I think so." The blonde leveled her pistol at the target, balancing it in both hands, and fired. She had aimed for the chest, but the energy round grazed past the target's shoulder instead, causing the projected light to flicker before restoring itself.

"Maybe not." Angela lowered the pistol immediately, looking uncertain. "Did I use my pistol often?"

"No. You only use it when you're cornered, or one of us is in danger," Fareeha replied. "That said, you still were a pretty good shot." She had witnessed quite a few headshots from the medic in the heat of battle. Sometimes she did it with only one hand, when Fareeha swore the pistol had

barely even cleared its holster.

Stepping forward, Fareeha lifted Angela's hands, adjusting her arms and posture. Explaining that Angela had missed her shot due to kickback, she let the blonde try again. This time the energy round punched straight through the chest, and the target flickered out of existence, simulating death. Then a new one sprang up in its place. They continued in this vein for the next few hours. Stationary targets at first, at varying distances. Then targets moving in predictable lines, followed by simulated organic unpredictability. Finally, Fareeha made Angela run side-to-side while making the shots, then a final sprint through the course itself as she took down as many targets as possible. 63% accuracy, the console reported when Angela reached the end, bending down with hands on knees to catch her breath. Her usual percentage was 87%. No matter, practice would make perfect. Well, near-perfect, statistically.

Fareeha waved her hand at Angela, motioning for her to come back. The blonde wore a look of utmost reluctance, hands now on her hips, shoulders sagging. She took a few lethargic steps, then stopped. Fareeha cocked her head, watching a grin appear on the woman's face, followed by the extension of the Valkyrie wings. Angela flew towards her, closer and closer, until Fareeha could see the panicked look on her face, and realised she was *not stopping*.

"Wait, *wait!*" She stretched out her arms as Angela slammed into her front, a sharp exhale leaving the blonde's lips when Fareeha's bulky chestpiece dug into her body. Fareeha stumbled backwards, almost losing her balance before activating thrusters. They hovered on the spot, both armours' thrusters pushing against each other, until the Valkyrie's gave up first. Bright yellow wings vanished from sight, and Fareeha landed back on the ground. Angela was laughing as she was set back on her feet. Silently at first, then out loud when Fareeha joined her.

"I'm so sorry," Angela said, one hand gripping onto her arm for support. "I forgot how to stop the thrusters for a second."

"It's okay." Grin still on Fareeha's face, she drank in the sight of Angela's flushed cheeks and bright eyes. Armoured fingers trailed across Angela's cheek, pushing aside blonde locks sticking to the side of her face. Her gaze fell to pink lips, still parted, taking small pants. Fareeha looked back up, searching blue eyes for permission, granted when Angela leaned forward and brushed her lips, feather light, across hers. Smiling at the display of restraint, Fareeha dipped her head, pressing close to familiar softness, guiding Angela as she explored her lips for the first time again. Gloved fingertips traced along her cheekbone, ghosting past Fareeha's ear, down the side of her neck, leaving goosebumps in their wake. Then she felt soft pressure on her jaw, pushing her lightly away. Fareeha opened her eyes, realising Angela was out of breath again. Maybe she pushed the blonde too hard during training, she thought guiltily.

"I've wanted to do that for too long," Angela murmured, fingers moving from her jaw to run along her bottom lip.

"Me too." Fareeha caught the slim hand, pressing a kiss on her palm. "But don't think kissing me will let you skip the rest of training."

Angela pouted. "Not even if I use tongue?"

"Tempting, but no. We have to get you back in fighting shape, remember?"

"Fine," Angela sighed, stepping away. "But please tell me we're done with firearms?"

"We are." She noted the tinge of relief in the blonde's features. "Time for something more fun."

Angela took to flying much more quickly than shooting. From the first moment her feet lifted off

the ground, she barely landed at all. Fareeha made her glide around the training range for a few circuits. First in wide arcs, before making her turns tighter and tighter, until she could maneuver through narrow corners without scratching her wings. Then they fell into a more exhilarating version of catch, Fareeha flying all around the base while the armoured angel kept up with her. The few times Angela actually came close to touching her armour, Fareeha executed a flip and slipped out of her range, laughing at her partner's yells to slow down. When her fuel gauge reached half-mark, she decided to take pity and turned, catching the blonde in her arms. Their lips met in a short, adrenaline-filled kiss, before Fareeha brought her to the top of the communications tower, just in time for the sunset.

---

Pharah adjusted her grip on the rocket launcher, scanning the area again for any sign of trouble. They had managed to stop the bomb heading for the city, but it was bad discipline to let their guards down before it was disarmed. There was, after all, a chance of reinforcements. When Pharah finished her sweep, she glanced at Mercy, who had her back turned. She had only gone through one week of training before being assigned to this mission. Pharah protested, but 76 was adamant, insisting Mercy would gain more experience in the field. So she settled for keeping an eye out for the medic, making sure no one could creep up on her.

A short string of Swedish expletives blasted through the team channel, causing all agents to wince in pain. Amusement at the sight could not sink in though, when Torbjörn switched back to English.

"Our bomb's a decoy!" he exclaimed. "The real one's being transported through the sewers!" More Swedish. "76, they're moving to the city centre. They'll reach in three minutes!"

"I'm on it!" Tracer yelled, leaving a blue flash in her wake before anyone could stop her.

"What are you doing, fool girl! You know nothing about bombs!" Torbjörn jumped out of the truck, watching helplessly as Tracer rapidly became a speck in the distance.

"Tracer, get back here this instant!" Soldier 76 ordered, but no dice.

*"We can't just leave civilians in the blast!"*

"I'm going after her," Mercy's voice came through the radio, urgent and focused.

The sight of gleaming yellow wings flying after their wayward comrade set off a switch in Pharah's mind. She holstered the launcher on her back and activated her thrusters, soaring after Mercy, tuning out 76's order to stop at once. With the Raptora's powerful jets, Pharah caught up to Mercy in record time and overtook her.

She opened a private channel, "Stay behind. I'll get Tracer."

"No." Mercy's voice was hard, sending a healthy mix of apprehension into Pharah's adrenaline. While they were stopping the decoy, Pharah noticed fear and shock pass through the medic's face as they gunned down the terrorists. Mercy took more than a few backward glances at the carnage they left behind, growing pale at the sight of bloodied corpses as she kept up with her teammates. If seeing dead enemies was unsettling, Pharah worried over what civilian casualties might do to her.

"There will be civilians hurt in the blast. I can help."

A thousand arguments clawed their way up Pharah's throat, but she swallowed them down. There was no time to fight her decision, not when the city centre was in sight. Ignoring the stares of

passers-by, Pharah located Tracer's IFF tag on her visor. It was zipping countless different ways as the agent blinked as many people out of range as possible.

*"10 seconds!"* Torbjörn informed them, and Pharah knew it was too late. The Raptora was fast, but not fast enough for her to reach the centre, grab Tracer, then clear the potential blast radius. A chill seeped into her chest when she realised this mission would have an ugly end.

*"5 seconds!"*

Pharah angled her thrusters, coming to a hard stop. She could see large crowds of people scrambling over one another, trying to escape. Tracer must have shocked them into action.

*"4!"*

She opened a channel to Tracer, yelling at her to return.

*"3!"*

Tracer, the damned woman, asked for one more second.

*"2!"*

Two blue streaks to the left and right, before it flashed towards Pharah.

*"1!"*

The streak stopped for an agonising split-second, before resuming its path.

*"0!"*

Brilliant blue light took up most of Pharah's vision, and she could just barely make out the fiery blast in the background. A heavy force augmented with time-bending capabilities rammed squarely into Pharah's chest, just as a searing wave of heat washed over them. The soldier's arms closed instinctively over Tracer – and someone else sandwiched between them – as she spun around, trusting the Raptora to keep them safe. Propelled blindly forward by the shockwave and a short thruster burst, they bounced painfully along the road before finally rolling to a stop on their sides. Pharah opened her eyes, releasing Tracer's head from the tight grip against her chest, allowing her to break away. She looked down and found Tracer clutching tightly onto a young boy.

"Are you all right?"

A Swiss-accented voice reached her ears. Pharah looked up to find the medic still on her feet. She nodded mutely, taking the outstretched hand and getting back onto her feet. Then she turned, eyes greeted with a scene of wreckage and despair. Cracks on the road grew larger as they reached nearer the city center, where debris now lay around the large hole where a fountain used to be. Broken water and sewage pipes flooded the area as fires spread along roadside stalls at the edges. Countless bodies lay scattered around the centre. Shocked civilians either stared catatonically or broke down in tears. The boy standing beside Tracer called for his mother through heavy sobs.

*"Tracer. Pharah. Mercy."* Soldier 76's voice came through the radio, in a placid tone which was the calm before the storm. *"Return to extraction. Now. 76 out."*

Tracer took a few hesitant steps back, staring at the boy, before tugging at Pharah's arm.

"Let's go," she muttered.



"No!"

Mercy stepped in front of them before they could backtrack. There was urgency in her wide eyes as she gestured at the city centre.

"We have to help them. *I* can help them," she said, holding up the caduceus staff.

"No. We have our orders." Pharah was not in the mood to argue. She grasped Mercy's arm firmly, pulling her back the way they came. The medic did not budge.

"Those people need our help!" Mercy tried to pull her arm away, but found herself being yanked back.

"Mercy. They can take care of their own. Now, head back to extraction before I drag you there."

"They died because of *us*, Pharah!" The medic raised her voice, refusing to be cowed. "Because we failed. This is *our* mess. We have to help!"

"The mission is *over*!" Pharah shouted, throwing fuel into Mercy's growing anger. She met the medic's furious glare through her visor. "Cleaning up this '*mess*' is not our objective!"

Betrayal twisted Mercy's stubborn visage, the corners of her mouth curving bitterly.

"I can't believe you." Tremors in her quiet tone. "All that talk about protecting people. It was all *bullshit*, wasn't it?" She tore her arm out of Pharah's vice-grip, pointing at the boy tottering unsteadily towards the wreckage. "You don't care about them. You don't care that I can bring his mother back. You don't care because you're a fucking automaton who only knows how to kill on command!"

Her last words left in a shout that rivalled Pharah's, hanging heavily in the night air as they stood in silence. Pharah's hands curled into fists, jaw clenched, as she watched Mercy's eyes start to glisten. She wanted to yell an argument back, tell her she was being a *stupid fucking idiot* for not looking at the bigger picture, for being such a fucking bleeding heart. But there were no words to be pushed through a throat squeezed shut.

"Ladies," Tracer said quietly, placing a hand on Pharah's arm. "We've gotta go now. Oh, shit." A streak of blue dashed out on her peripheral vision. Pharah turned her head to watch Tracer blink the boy to the sidewalk, then to a passer-by trying to take pictures, smacking his phone to the ground. She did not wait for the man to start yelling, blinking back beside Pharah and Mercy.

"*Let's go!*" she insisted, the piercing wail of sirens reaching their ears.

Pharah wasted no more time. She gathered each woman in one arm, Tracer reaching around her neck for support and Mercy staying stiff with one hand clutching onto her pauldron, and sped off to extraction as ordered.

Like an automaton.

---

Fareeha growled, pushing her face further into the pillow as her door's buzzer went off for the third time in a row. Was her resolute silence not hint enough that she did not want company? Apparently not, because the fourth buzz came. She ground her teeth together, hands gripping tighter onto the corner of her pillow.

A fifth buzz.

Shooting off the bed in spite, Fareeha practically slammed her hand on the keyboard, incensed when her action naturally brought up several unrelated applications on the computer. Then she tapped on the right button, taking a breath before speaking.

"I *told* you, Aleksandra. I am not in the mood to spar."

*"Well, good news for ya, love!"* The cheerful cockney accent surprised her. *"I'm not here for a fight either. So let me in, yeah?"*

"What do you want," Fareeha sighed, massaging her temples. She was not in the mood for anything. Had not been for the past three days.

*"I want to eat. So please open the door before the food gets cold?"*

She threw her hands up in defeat, closing the channel. Fareeha went to open the door, getting a glimpse of Lena's grin before she blinked into her room, setting two white boxes on the coffee table. A literal second later, they were opened to release a tongue-watering aroma.

"Hope you don't me saying, love," Lena said, looking up at her as she moved closer, sticking a disposable fork and spoon into each box. "But you look like shit."

"Thanks," Fareeha muttered. She sat down heavily, taking one box to find pasta wafting its siren scent into her nose.

"At least Angie's gotten her act together already," Lena said, smile on her lips as she dug into her food. "Even managed to punch Leksy's nose in during training yesterday. Accidentally, of course."

Fareeha gave a non-committal grunt, stuffing her mouth with pasta so she did not have to reply.

"You know she didn't mean what she said, right?" Lena did not bother to wait for the right moment. She did not wait. She created those moments herself.

Another grunt.

"You sound like Winston. *Rngh, mgh*," she imitated said gorilla's grunts, then slurped another mouthful of noodles. "Seriously though. You haven't gone to speak to her?"

"No." Angela had tried, though. First by buzzing her door. Then leaving numerous missed calls on her phone. Then messages asking Fareeha to speak to her when she was ready. It had been an entire day since her last message.

"Now, come on." Lena waved her fork in the air. Fareeha glanced down, and was surprised to find the woman's box already half-empty. "You can't keep avoiding her forever. Besides, she's been feeling down ever since debrief. And we all know how to remedy that, hm?" She wiggled her brows at Fareeha, who sighed.

The soldier closed her unfinished box, setting it back down on the table. "I'm done. Thanks for the food."

"Where do you think you're going?" Lena asked when Fareeha did not walk towards the door, but her bed instead.

"To sleep."

"Oh no, no! It's 1 in the bloody afternoon!"

It happened in a nauseating flash – she felt small but firm hands on her shoulders, before she found herself staring at the bedroom door. Fareeha felt the food in her stomach churn from the movement, but she did not have time to react. Lena had the door open within seconds, then another blur, and they were standing in front of Angela's door. Shivering slightly at the cool metal floor beneath her bare feet, Fareeha bent forward, getting hold of her bearings. Lena's hands straightened her, patting her back apologetically.

"Sorry, love. Sometimes I forget blinking can be disorienting." Then Lena buzzed Angela's door before Fareeha could stop her, grinning at the shocked stare and vanishing from sight, accompanied by the sound of Fareeha's door closing.

Feet moving haphazardly, Fareeha panicked in front of Angela's door, not knowing where to go. Back to her room? No, Lena would not let her back in. To the kitchen? No, she was in a state of disarray. Her clothes were rumpled, hair uncombed since she woke up that morning. Back to her room. *Back to her room!* She would knock the door down if she had to, Fareeha decided, feet starting down the corridor when a familiar voice rang out behind her.

"Fareeha?"

She froze, hearing footsteps coming up behind her, then jerked away from the touch on her arm. Fareeha turned, heart pounding, to find Angela peering at her in concern. Her hand dropped slowly to her side. Avoiding the blonde's gaze, she took another step back.

"Fareeha, please. I need to talk to you," Angela said softly. When the Egyptian did not reply, she took a tentative step forward. Then another when Fareeha made no move to run away, and another until she stood right before her.

"But I'd rather not do this in the hallway." She reached out again, slowly this time, to hold onto the side of her shoulder.

Fareeha stiffened, but allowed herself to be steered into Angela's room, where she remained by the door after it slid shut. She watched Angela turn to face her, hands clasped at waist-level. Lena was right, the blonde had gotten herself together. Groomed hair framed her face on one side, tucked behind an ear on the other. Eyes clear, clothes fresh. Fareeha noted the dark purplish tinge on her knuckles.

"About what I said during the mission," Angela started. "It was hurtful. I'm sorry." Slender fingers fidgeted, before tightening around one another. "Please forgive me."

"No." Fareeha said, unable to stop the bitter smile parting her lips. "You were right."

"What?"

"You were right. I only know how to kill."

Angela stared at her, mouth falling open. "That's not true." She moved closer, causing Fareeha take a reflexive step backwards, back hitting the wall. "You *know* that's not true."

Hollow laughter fell from her lips, punctuated by hitches in breath. "But it is, isn't it? I can't do anything else."

"Fareeha, please," Angela said, voice tight. "I didn't mean what I said. It's not—"

"*You don't understand!*" The words burst out of her lips, reverberating through the room. "You don't know what happened—" Her voice cracked. Fareeha squeezed her eyes shut, hand clamping over her mouth as she pressed closer to the wall for support. She felt Angela's hand on her arm,

holding her steady as she rode out the need to break into pieces. Then gentle fingers trailed up to her wrist, pulling her hand down. There was a slight sting when Angela touched her lip where teeth had broken skin.

"You still don't know how you lost your memories," Fareeha whispered.

"I do," Angela replied, sending cold dread through her chest. "I found my field recording of the mission. Yours as well. I know what happened." She paused, eyes widening.

"You think you're the reason I died." Angela stared up at her, revelation confirmed when her face crumpled again. "Oh god, Fareeha—"

"I should have listened to you," Fareeha squeezed the words through her throat. "I should have stopped, but I didn't. I should have broken your fall, but I didn't. I should have *protected* you, but I *didn't*." She took a ragged breath, feeling tears spill from her eyes. "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry—"

"Fareeha, listen to me," Angela said, cupping her face in both hands, thumbs wiping futilely at her tears. "What happened to me was not your fault. Understand? It was an accident. No. No, you're not sorry," she continued when apologies kept falling from Fareeha's tongue. "You have *nothing* to be sorry for. Look at me."

Angela tilted her head up, forcing Fareeha to meet her gaze. Reaching down to entwine their fingers, Angela pressed the back of Fareeha's hand against her chest, right above the heart. Seconds passed as Fareeha focused on the faint, regular beat. Her sobs started to fade, breathing growing steadier as she unconsciously matched Angela's calm rhythm. Blinking her blurred vision back into clarity, Fareeha gazed back at Angela, watching a small smile curve the corners of her lips.

"Feel that?" Angela said. "I'm alive. And I'm happy. Because of you."

Despite herself, Fareeha laughed softly. "You're happy? After everything that has happened?"

"Why not? I have someone willing to watch over me even when I couldn't remember her. That has to count for something, right?"

Fareeha gave a close-lipped smile, gaze falling to their entwined hands. The post-crying haze was starting to settle on her eyelids, but her heart was calmer than it had been for the past three days. Or more accurately, she realised, for the past three weeks. It was quite a relief, really. Like she could breathe easier.

"Fareeha," Angela said, drawing her attention back. "It can't have been easy, carrying this around with you for so long. And I know it's easier said than done, but try to put it down. Leave what happened in the past. It's time to move on."

Fareeha nodded, letting the words settle in as much as they could. Her mind was having trouble processing things right now.

"Angela?"

"Hm?"

"I'd like to be by myself for a while. To...think. Straighten my thoughts."

"Of course. Take all the time you need." Angela gave her hand a squeeze. She led Fareeha to the door, pausing to wipe the tear tracks off her cheeks, before tapping on the controls. "Come back to me if you need anything, alright? Even if it's just chocolate."

Fareeha nodded, stepping into the corridor. It was not until she returned to her room – already vacated by Lena, thankfully – that she realised what Angela had just said. She frowned, searching her memories. Fareeha had not divulged her weakness for chocolates yet, had she?

## Chapter End Notes

I wrote, I lost control, I raise you an extra chapter.

But it won't be up too fast. Until then, have fun with the brawl and infinite overtimes.

# Recovery

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Fareeha sat on the hood of her car, foot bobbing idly as she checked her watch again. 12.36pm. She sighed, lying back on dark blue metal, feeling its coolness even through her jacket. The girls were supposed to be here six minutes ago. For all their punctuality while on duty, time became an abstract concept off duty. Either that, or Fareeha needed to '*remove the soldier baton stuck up her ass*', as Hana very nicely put it. Maybe she should start taking the girl's advice to be more laid-back. She had arrived ten minutes before the agreed meeting time. Putting her hands behind her head, Fareeha closed her eyes. If only the engine was warm beneath her, the dull white ceiling replaced by a night sky filled with stars, and the stale indoor air was a cool breeze. It would be perfect.

A hard slap against her exposed stomach shocked her back up, and she came face-to-face with Lena's playful grin.

"Sorry, love. But I've always wanted to do that."

"Do what?" she asked, pulling down her top.

"You know. Get a feel of what Angie's been having." Lena wiggled her eyebrows and fingers.

Fareeha blushed. "We haven't been..."

"Right. And I don't drink tea by the gallon."

"But it's true," Fareeha muttered, as Lena turned to greet the remaining two ladies of their party. Her eyes landed on Angela, who had her hair loose about her shoulders. The two of them had moved slowly after Fareeha's...episode. They spent more time in their duties, Angela in the medical lab and Fareeha on patrols, regaining a semblance of life before the amnesia. Fareeha still dropped by more than usual, just to check on Angela's progress and steal a couple of kisses. But that was as far as they went. No quick trips back to their quarters, no heated trysts on Angela's work desk. It was as innocent as they could have been, and Fareeha found it quite refreshing.

A soft hand on her cheek and a kiss on the other brought Fareeha out of her thoughts. She focused back on the present and, more importantly, the lovely woman in front of her.

"Hey," she murmured, curling her hand over Angela's.

"Hey." Blue eyes softened, accompanying the gentle smile. Pale thumb brushed over her knuckles, as she noted the beginnings of shadows beneath her eyes, and faint creases near the corners. Angela mentioned having trouble sleeping, but insisted it was of little concern. Maybe it was not so minor after all. Before Fareeha could ask, though, surprise entered Angela's face when she was pushed out of the way.

"Alright, scrubs. You can be mushy later." Hana held out her hand, palm faced upwards. "Hand over the keys, Captain."

"What?" Fareeha frowned, making no move to reach for her keys.

"Give me the keys, darling Fareeha," Hana paraphrased the request, adding a poor Swiss accent. "I'm the one driving today. We took a vote."

"More like we drew biscuit sticks," Lena corrected from behind the girl, waving a box of the snack. "And Hana drew the longest one."

"Do you even know how to drive?" Fareeha asked, brows drawing closer together.

"I pilot a mech, for god's sake," she said exasperatedly. "But yes. I have a driving license."

"Do I get a say in this?"

"No."

Fareeha stared at the determined girl, then glanced at her two companions. Receiving only helpless shrugs, she drew her keys uncertainly from her jeans pocket. Hana snatched it before she could have second thoughts and unlocked the car doors. Fareeha threw Angela a worried look, getting a sympathetic pat on her back.

"You'd better sit in front. Just in case," Angela said. She followed Lena into the backseat, leaving Fareeha standing uneasily by the car.

"Hurry up, Captain!" Hana said through the rolled down window. "I wanna be at the carnival while they still have churros."

Feeling more nervous than she did before missions, Fareeha sat in the passenger seat. Something she regretted when Hana zipped the car out of the garage faster than Lena with her choral accelerator.

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*"I thought you have a driving license!"* Fareeha yelled, when *her* car swerved to avoid collision with a truck.

"I do!" Hana said, grin on her face like she was in her mech. "Loosen up, will you? Your car's still undamaged."

The word *'still'* clattered alarmingly in her mind. "How the hell did you pass the driving test?"

"With flying colours," Hana said smugly. "But you know how the amount of shits you give decreases after the test?"

"No."

"Yeah, mine is practically gone by now. But don't worry, I promise your car will stay in one piece. Double promise." Hana jerked the steering wheel, changing lanes and earning a honk from behind. Fareeha looked in the rearview mirror, watching a car slow down to stay away from them, and a motorcyclist flip them off. She leaned back into her seat, closing her eyes and praying to all gods from all religions to keep them safe.

It seemed like an eternity had passed when they finally turned into the parking lot, Hana slotting the car into place with expert precision. The silence when the engine stopped was akin to that of a theme park ride when it pulled back into station. A sharp drop-off in excitement and daredevil tendencies, leaving only astonishment that their hearts were still beating. Fareeha finally regained her senses and stumbled out of the vehicle, squinting slightly under the sun's glare, relieved that her feet were on solid ground again. She passed an eye over the car, relieved to find it was untouched. Angela made a beeline for her, gripping onto her arm with a haunted look in her eyes.

"You're driving when we leave," she muttered. It was not a request.

Fareeha nodded. This was an order she would gladly follow.

They made their way to where Lena and Hana waited, scanning the crowds milling around large multi-coloured tents. Angela and Lena both put on shades, the younger woman finishing her get-up with a beanie. It had only been a month since the disastrous mission, and a lot of pictures and videos were circulated online by civilians who had been at the scene. More than a few were of Pharah, Mercy, and Tracer. Although the visuals were grainy and the only thing clearly visible was Pharah's Raptora armour as she flew to extraction, they were still wary and took minor precautions. Fareeha did not bother though. She doubted anyone could see her face or tattoo beneath the helmet.

"What do you want to do first?" Lena asked, hands on her hips.

"Food!" Hana said.

"Games," Lena countered.

"Oh, no! I am not touching those games. They're all rigged."

"Please. You only say that because you can't blame server lag when you lose."

Hana's mouth slowly fell open as she stared at Lena smiling smugly under her shades.

"How about this, ladies?" Angela stepped in as Korean syllables were tossed at Londoner. "I will accompany Lena. Fareeha, go with Hana. And please get something other than sweet foods."

"I'll try," Fareeha said, placing a hand on Hana's shoulder and steering her towards the food stands.

"I'll get you spotted dick, Lena!" Hana called out to the still grinning woman. "So you can eat a dick! Get it? Eat a dick!"

They attracted a few glances and Fareeha pushed Hana faster along, diving into the midst of a noisy crowd. Then they fell into an interminable cycle of waiting, buying, and waiting again, filling up the small paper bag Hana brought along. Having countless people shouting over them, shoving against their shoulders, and trying to cut their lines wore even on Fareeha's patience. She was starting to regret taking up Lena's suggestion to go out today, when it was finally decided their haul was good enough. Hana pulled her away from the open-air theatre nearby, muttering something about *'a sea of sweat and body odour'*, and seated them on a bench relatively far away from the crowds. As expected, the girl dug into a box of churros first, taking a big bite and groaning in satisfaction.

"Fuck, this is so worth it. *No!*" She smacked Fareeha's hand away. "You have your own damn box."

Fareeha resisted the urge to grab one anyway, taking a sip from her bottle of water instead. She tilted her face back, enjoying the mix of a warm afternoon sun and light wind. After being cooped up at base and only being allowed on covert missions, being out in the park was like a beautiful taste of freedom. Filling her lungs with fresh air, she let out a long, deep breath before righting her head again. That was when the white ribbon on Hana's ponytail caught her eye. Fareeha reached out, catching one end of the ribbon between her fingers to feel its unexpectedly rough texture.

"Nice ribbon," Fareeha said when Hana turned, feeling the tug on the back of her head. The girl fixed her with an odd look. Her hand fell away immediately, feeling as though she had one foot on a landmine. She waited for her companion to speak, growing unsettled under the gaze.



"It's for mourning," Hana said simply.

"Oh." She watched awkwardly as the girl returned to her churros, stuffing a particularly big piece into her mouth. Hana's expression was placid, dark eyes roving over the carnival tents, foot tapping in time to the faint chords of music.

"It's for a friend," Hana continued, answering the unspoken question. "From MEKA. Blew up his mech then jumped on a grenade. Saved two squads. Dumbass always wanted to be a hero. Got his wish." She shrugged, grabbing Fareeha's bottle to take a few gulps.

"Was in the Korean news. Just this morning." She answered the second silent question, pulling the half-empty bottle away. "They gave his parents a shiny new medal. Like it fucking helps. Assholes."

Fareeha kept quiet, noticing the slight tremble in her bottom lip before she clenched her jaw. She wanted to hold the girl, but thought better of it. Hana thrust the bottle back into her hands, nodding at the paper bag between them.

"Churros are better when they're hot, you know."

"They're yours, if you want them."

Hana rolled her eyes. "What is this, a pity snack? I'll just take whatever Angela leaves behind later." She rummaged through the bag, pulling out a carefully packaged corndog. Then she paused before tearing off the wrap, returning Fareeha's stare.

"Fuck's sake. I shouldn't have told you about him, should I?"

"For what it's worth..." Fareeha heaved a sigh and relented, digging out her own box of churros. "I'm glad you're taking it well."

"Very well," Hana agreed, unwrapping her food. "Compared to the way you moped over Angie, I'm stellar." She groaned again, corndog stopping right at her lips before she pulled it away. "Sorry. I'm being bitchy, aren't I?"

"It's alright." Fareeha smiled. The girl was trying to distract herself with anger. She made a mental note to check up on her later that night.

"You know," Hana said through a mouthful of cornmeal and hot dog. "I'm actually glad I'm wearing this for the first time here. Thought I was gonna have to break it out for..." She sealed her lips then, chewing quickly.

Fareeha nodded in acknowledgement, going with Hana's flow. Then she took a bite of her snack, realising her mistake when the chocolate-covered pastry touched her tongue. It was... It was...

"Amazing, isn't it?" Hana observed her close encounter with nirvana.

She nodded silently, not opening her mouth for fear of letting the sweetness escape.

"Oh no."

The pair looked up to find Angela staring at Fareeha in dismay. Lena stood next to her, carrying a teddy bear and a big water gun.

"Hey Hana," Lena said, tossing the gun into the girl's lap. "Nerf this!" They dissolved into an energetic bout of bickering as Angela leaned down, peering into Fareeha's box.

"You're not going to stop eating these, are you?"

Fareeha shook her head, eyes wide. As though to confirm the doctor's fears, she quickly devoured another piece, wishing the flavour would never ever leave her tongue. A fond smile quirked Angela's lips, her thumb brushing off a chocolate stain on Fareeha's mouth.

"Whoa. Something happened." Hana's voice broke their connection. The wail of a single siren reached Fareeha's ears and she frowned, looking past Angela. There was an ambulance at the park's entrance, paramedics sprinting from the vehicle to the theatre, where a small gap had formed in the audience. It did not take long before someone was strapped to a stretcher and brought back to the ambulance.

"Probably fainted. Or a heart attack," Lena said, eyes on the paramedics as they slammed the doors shut.

"What do you think, doctor?" Fareeha asked. She glanced up at Angela, who kept staring at the entrance after the ambulance had departed. "Angela?"

The faraway look in her eyes remained, body stiff even when Fareeha shook her arm. She stood in concern, placing both hands on Angela's shoulders and turning the woman to face her. Blue eyes looked right past hers, before widening in panic. Angela clutched onto her arms, nails digging painfully through the sleeves.

"Call Winston," she said, voice strained.

"Why?" Fareeha asked.

*"Just call him!"*

Fareeha complied at her fierce tone, dialing Winston's number. Her phone was then snatched out of her hand, Angela taking a step back and pressing it to her ear. Traces of fear were now apparent in her expression.

"Winston?" Angela said. "Where are you? Oh. I thought..." She trailed off, confusion trickling into her eyes as she looked back at Fareeha, then at Hana and Lena. "No. I mean, yes. I'm fine. I just..." Angela pinched the bridge of her nose, closing her eyes. "Is everything alright? And Jack? Jesse? Oh, good. No, we're not in trouble. I...just wanted to check on you. Yes. Goodbye."

The four women remained silent as Angela lowered her hand, staring at the phone's screen. Fareeha slid the device cautiously out of the stiff hand and brushed her fingers across Angela's cheek, catching her attention.

"What was that about?"

"I...don't know." Angela stood in place, looking uncertainly around. Lena held onto her arm and guided her to the bench.

"Would you like to head back, love?" Lena asked gently. "Get some rest? You look like you've seen a ghost."

"No, I'm fine. I'd just like to sit a while." Her voice was quiet, and they left her alone. In a manner of speaking, Fareeha sat beside Angela, keeping an eye on her as Hana pushed food item after food item into the blonde's hands, urging her to eat and regain some colour. Lena kept up a never-ending tide of conversation with the girl, until Angela eventually recovered from her mood. She never explained the incident and they did not pursue, on account that she was behaving normally again.

At least, for the next few days.

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A dip in the bed brought Fareeha out of her rest. She raised her arm automatically, feeling the weight move closer and slip under the covers, before draping a loose hold over it. Lifting both her chin and eyelids, Fareeha watched the blonde head nestle tightly against her neck, pale arm reaching around her back in a tight hold. Feeling light erratic breaths against her skin, Fareeha rubbed her partner's back soothingly, closing her eyes as Angela pressed impossibly closer.

After two more weeks of dealing with increasingly disturbing nightmares, Angela finally caved and fell back into her old habit of climbing into Fareeha's bed at night. It started off simple enough – Fareeha acted as an anchor, her presence a reminder that Angela's dreams were harmless and vague enough to push aside easily. Then buried memories resurfaced, weaving explicit detail through the cracks of her amnesia. A combat knife embedded in her gut. Ringing in her ears from grenades and gunfire. Screams of patients tormented by poison. Droplets of blood from a kill trailing down her skin. At its worst, Angela woke up with a single agonising sensation ingrained in her consciousness. Pressing her hand against the ghost of a bullet wound. Clutching her arm where it was not broken. Throwing an instinctive punch at an enemy's silhouette – which was usually Fareeha trying to get her attention. Unfortunately, feeling pain in her knuckles was the most effective way of bringing Angela back. But over time Fareeha learnt to catch the blows half-awake. Then she adapted Angela's tactic, pressing the trembling hands against her warm skin, guiding Angela away from the remnants of her dream. She would wait patiently as her lover calmed down, before pulling her into a soothing hold and rocking her back to sleep.

It was rough on Angela when the memories started trickling back. Not only during sleep, but during waking hours as well. She would experience bouts of disorientation, mixing up times, locations, and names. On many occasions, she had asked agents why they were still in base when they should be on a mission that happened eight years ago. Jack and Lena reported Angela running to them and checking up on wounds that had long been healed by the doctor herself. Fareeha had been greeted with her mother's name when she entered Angela's office for a visit. Angela herself was growing strained from trying to maintain composure. She grew less settled and lively, rediscovering her hectic sleep pattern when she started working longer hours to avoid dreaming. Athena assured them that it was normal, but that did not stop them from worrying. Not even when Angela learnt to stop and think before she acted, and slipped slowly back into her old persona. She was trying to reconcile almost twenty to thirty years' worth of ordeals within a mere fraction of the time. It must be a strain even on one of the world's brightest minds.

With a start, Fareeha opened her eyes again. She must have fallen asleep, because she did not remember Angela climbing out of bed. Sliding a hand over the empty spot, Fareeha pushed herself up, squinting through the darkness to find a figure sitting at a corner of the couch. She blinked the sleepiness away and gave a big yawn, swinging her legs off the bed to accompany the lone woman.

"Lights, warm. Sixty percent."

The soft orange glow filled the room, revealing the doctor sitting with both feet on the couch, arms wrapped loosely around her knees. Her hair was still tousled from sleep, stray strands sticking out in different directions, as though trying to escape.

"I'm sorry," Angela said, the moment Fareeha sat down.

"And I must have missed something."

"You're losing sleep because of me."

"Ah, that. It's not your fault. I just thought it'd be fun to have matching eye bags. Although..." Fareeha placed a finger under her chin, tilting Angela's face towards her and fixing the blonde with a scrutinising gaze. "You don't wear it as well as I do."

Angela scoffed and flicked her finger away. "I wear everything better than you."

"If you say so."

"Incorrigible."

"Egotistical," Fareeha fired back, wrapping an arm around the egotist's shoulders anyway. She was still rather stiff, Fareeha noted, pressing her lips lightly against the blonde's temple.

"Bad dream?"

"No," Angela replied, growing quieter. "Just thoughts."

"May I offer you a penny?"

A soft, breathy laugh. Angela sat still for a moment before scooting closer towards Fareeha. She reached out, running her fingers along the back of Fareeha's hand, before slipping between their darker counterparts.

"I am...worried." Angela kept her gaze on their hands and fell silent. Fareeha waited, watching the tiny twitches in Angela's jaw as she waited for more. But it did not come.

"About?"

"The memories. So much has been coming back lately, and I..." Her words trailed off in a sigh. "I find myself wishing I don't have to remember anymore."

Fareeha nodded. It was a sentiment she was familiar with. That many were familiar with, no matter where they were from. She remembered the drunken celebrations back in the military, watching her brothers and sisters wrecking their livers with alcohol. Playing games, making bets, picking up one night stands at the bar. All so focused on being happy, in hopes of forgetting what they had done to earn the right to be that happy. The rookies were always hardest to watch – they drank too much, sang too much, fucked too much, hoping excess would drown out conscience before it returned to bite their asses. It never worked. Fareeha learnt her lesson after a few trials and kept her mug close, only taking generous swigs when someone demanded a toast. It was always better to keep awake and remember, than have reality and a hangover crash onto your fragile head the next morning.

*At least she doesn't have a hangover.* Turning over Angela's hand, Fareeha ran rough fingertips along softer skin, tracing every detail she had committed to memory. The line that curved from below her index finger to the base of her palm. Gentle blue ridges in her wrist. A bullet scar on her inner forearm, from her third field operation with Overwatch. Though fewer than Fareeha's, Angela wore scars of her own. She did not keep them out of necessity – the technology at her disposal could remove scarring in a blink of an eye. She kept them because she *wanted* them to stay there. *'Reminders of my own mortality'*, the medic called them.

"It's normal. I wish I could too, at times," Fareeha murmured. "But life is not kind, is it? We have no choice but to remember."

"I know." Angela watched her trace idle patterns over her arm, before returning the dark brown gaze. Lips curling in a wan smile, Angela reached up, fingers gliding across Fareeha's cheek in a

slow caress.

"But sometimes, life is not that cruel."

Fareeha returned the smile and leaned into her touch, heart aching at her words, unsure if they were true. If life was kinder, it would have given her someone who did not fight on the front lines, who did not stagger into her med bay and bleed all over the operating table after every other mission. It would have given her a peace of mind, instead of a soldier who could only hold her when she needed sanctuary.

The touch on her cheek fell away, replaced with two arms around her waist and a head resting on her shoulder. Fareeha returned the hold, resting her head atop pale tresses.

"I can feel them, Fareeha," Angela said softly. "The memories. Like they're waiting to consume me."

"I'm scared." It was an almost inaudible whisper, a confession second-guessed at the last minute. Her arms tightened around Fareeha.

"Don't be, *malak*. We will face them together."

---

*"20 minutes to landing."*

Athena's voice came through the speakers, but it did little to stop the busy click of metal against metal as the agents performed their last round of preparations. With the weight of her holstered launcher on her back, Fareeha slipped past where Reinhardt and Zarya were bantering as usual, towards the corner where Angela stood with her staff. Bright wings flashed out behind the Valkyrie armour, before vanishing just as quickly. The medic noticed Fareeha's approach, giving her a small smile.

Angela had been dealing with her recovery better than expected. In the three long weeks that passed, she had gotten used to getting flashes of images at random times, falling into a habit of writing down what she saw and cross-checking it with Athena's database. Placing the pieces into an organised timeline kept her from being overwhelmed. Though darker visions still haunted her at night, they were less intense and came with lesser frequency. The shadows under her eyes started to fade, but the subtle austerity that Doctor Ziegler used to wear took its place. Recollection of hardship wore on the angles of her face, paring down the fullness of youthful idealism. It was hard to watch, but necessary. The team, the *world* needed her expertise and experience. If only the price was not Angela's to pay.

"Take care out there, alright?"

"Don't I always?" Angela quirked a brow at her.

"I meant take care of *yourself*," Fareeha replied.

Her smile widened and, disregarding the presence of other agents, Angela pressed a quick kiss on the corner of her mouth.

"I will. But only if you do, too." She patted Fareeha's shoulder, then strode over to her assigned team.

They were on a mission to seize an abandoned Overwatch base back from Talon's hands. More than half of the gathered agents were deployed, with only Winston, Mei, and McCree at mission control back in Gibraltar. A risky decision, but Overwatch would have no future anyway if Talon

was allowed to plunder the facility's data.

Fareeha joined her own team – the decoy – consisting of Reinhardt, Aleksandra, Lucio, Jack, and Lena. Their job was to cause as much havoc as possible on Talon's doorstep while the smaller team – Genji, Torbjörn, Angela, and Hana – slipped in through the escape tunnels and regained control of the facility's systems. It would be messy. *Very* messy. But they would pull through. They had to.

Jack briefly went over the plan again, and finished their pep talk just two minutes before landing. As he turned to the exit, Fareeha snuck another glance at Angela who was in battle stance, holding her staff at ready.

"Don't worry, Captain," Hana's quiet voice came through a private channel. "I'll watch her back."

"Thanks," Fareeha said, raising her voice slightly as the ramp unsealed. "Watch your own as well. You need to be alive when I bring you out for more churros."

"Roger that."

---

Vaguely wondering why Widowmaker did not bother using a silencer, Pharah flew into a nosedive at the sound of the rifle's loud report. As she pulled back up, Pharah shot a rocket at the platform where the sniper stood, knowing full well she was long gone. Irritation started to tug on her nerves as she flew towards her teammates again, resuming covering fire. The spider was being a pest she would like to swat against a concrete wall as soon as possible. Or an electric fence. As though to taunt her, the red IFF tag she had assigned to Widowmaker reappeared at the edge of her visor.

This time, she did not wait. Pharah swooped down to where the bright blue streak ended, replaced by rapid pulse flashes. She grabbed Tracer around the middle and lifted her off the ground, soaring towards the sniper's position.

"Widowmaker," Pharah said before Tracer could finish yelling her question. Their target slipped back into the shadows just as she dropped Overwatch's living, breathing spider repellent back on solid metal ground. She could hear her high-pitched whoop as they parted ways, Tracer off on the hunt and Pharah back to the entrance. The giant blast doors were still closed, meaning their infiltration team had not reached any of their objectives.

"Bravo, status," 76 growled over the comm.

*"Hang in there a little longer,"* Torbjörn replied. There were rapid beeps of a console in the background. *"Talon's gotten their dirty hands all over the systems. We're getting there as fast as we can."*

"Be faster. It's getting hot here."

*"Alright, alright."* Torbjörn's exasperation was obvious. They heard a door sliding open through the radio, before the channel was cut.

The Raptora systems and launcher were getting warmer by the second, as Pharah shot continuous rockets and concussive blasts at the Talon horde. She landed on top of a bold mercenary creeping up on 76, feeling the spine snap under her weight. Barely noticing his nod, Pharah activated her half-refilled thrusters and rammed into a pair close to Zarya, sending them flying backwards unconscious. The cacophony of gunfire became muted when a blue barrier shrouded her, and

Pharah seized the chance to fly up again, firing at the squads gathering on the upper platforms. That was when a series of explosions rocked the facility.

"What the hell was that?" The words left Pharah's mouth involuntarily. There was no sign of the blasts on the exterior of the base. Which meant they were on the inside.

"Bravo!" 76 opened the team channel. "What's your status?"

Static. It dragged on from second to second, white noise dripping cold fear into Pharah's chest. Letting loose a last volley of rockets, she landed again and reloaded, bringing up Bravo team's status on her visor. Her eyes widened—

"Bravo! Do you read?"

"76," Mercy's voice broke through with controlled pants, heavy footsteps and thudding of D.Va's mech in the background. *"Talon activated self-destruct in the west wing. We are cut off from Torbjörn and Genji, but they are making their way to the control room. D.Va and I will open the blast doors for you."*

"Understood." 76's tone betrayed nothing of their situation. Reinhardt's shield was now flickering more often, unable to get to full charge between salvos. Zarya and 76 were limping, the woman's head kept on a swivel as she threw barriers around, and the soldier's biotic fields struggled to keep bleeding comrades intact. Lucio made hectic circuits around the team, blowing enemies back while his healing fields worked with 76's. According to the Raptora, there were two bullets in her back and one in her side. Thrusters were down to half-capacity, ammo at one-third, and only one rocket barrage was left. It was going to be tight.

Or, she thought so until Pharah noticed the waves getting lighter. Either they were running out of cannon fodder, or more were being deployed in Torbjörn and Genji's direction. If so, then they needed to move in soon.

Heavy metal grinding split the air as the blast doors moved open, providing the first shred of relief for the squad. Finally, something was going according to plan. The thought pushed them on. Reinhardt brought up his shield and charged forward, slamming four mercenaries straight into the lower half of the blast door. Zarya lobbed a charge through the widening crack alongside 76's rockets, wreaking havoc where they had not stepped in yet.

*"Take cover! Five seconds!"* D.Va yelled over the radio and they scrambled for the nearest walls, knowing what was to come.

*"NERF THIS, BITCHES!"*

They heard the pink mech's system overloading, watching a few Talon mercs run futilely out of the blast doors, before they were blown apart by the intense shockwave. The grisly show was given no further attention, however, as the team entered the base proper. Their surroundings were ruined by the mech's explosion, debris blown into corners away from the blackened steel floor in the middle. A messy way to clear a room of enemies, but effective. They watched Mercy glide from the control room on the upper walkway, depositing D.Va in their midst. There was a big grin on the girl's face as she high-fived Pharah, sending a lance of pain down her back.

"You're hurt," D.Va said, noting the wince on her face.

"Not everyone has a mech, you know," Pharah replied as Mercy healed the others as best she could. Then she felt her chin being forced to the side, and came face-to-face with the medic. Mercy held up her suit's holo-display, rapidly running through her wounds, before granting her a

short healing stream from the staff.

"I cannot heal your wounds fully," she said clinically. "The bullets are still in your body." Then she turned before Pharah could react, facing the rest of the team.

"Lucio, D.Va, Reinhardt, Zarya. Proceed through the living quarters to the east and up to the control room. Torbjörn and Genji are there, but Talon has them pinned down. Help them. *Go!*" Her command shocked them into action, and they sprinted further into the base before rounding a corner, out of sight.

"Where is Tracer?" Mercy asked, one hand on 76's shoulder and another under his arm. The soldier was in bad shape – most of his front was dripping with blood, right arm trembling under the weight of his pulse rifle. Heavy breathing could be heard even from behind his mask.

*"Southern checkpoint. I've taken care of the Talon reinforcements, but some have slipped through. Heading back to your location now."*

Mercy uttered a short German curse as she guided 76 to a corner. Pharah held onto his other side, helping to settle him down on the floor, back to the wall. The man refused to let go of his rifle even when badly injured. With utter care, Mercy removed his cracked mask. A short stream of blood flowed down his chin the moment it came off.

"Pharah, cover the entrance," Mercy ordered, and she complied.

It did not take long before she noticed dark specks in the distance. She readied her launcher, casting one last glance at 76 and Mercy, before taking to the air. Bullets started flying in her direction the moment she was airborne, but skilled maneuvers kept her from biting any. Taking careful aim, Pharah launched two rockets into one of two squads, causing them to scatter. Before they could regroup, blue flashes hit them from behind and disappeared again. It took a surprisingly short amount of time to take out the first group. But as Pharah took aim at the second, Tracer's voice burst through the Alpha channel.

*"Fuck! Reaper's pulling ahead!"*

"Shit," 76 spat. Pharah fell back just in time to see Mercy push him back against the wall.

"Do not move." The threat in Mercy's voice was clear, sending a shiver down Pharah's spine even though it was not directed at her. She had not behaved this way during missions for the past few months. Was she...?

"Pharah."

She turned, catching the pulse rifle in one hand. Understanding Mercy's intent, Pharah holstered her launcher and hefted the rifle in both hands, getting used to its weight. 76's weapon would be much more useful in close range than her own.

"Mercy—," 76 groaned in protest, attempt at standing foiled again.

"Stay here, or I'll make sure you cannot move until the mission is over," Mercy replied, leaving him in his biotic field, and joined Pharah at the entrance. She held the caduceus staff in one hand, and drew the blaster in the other. Her jaw was set, eyes cold.

Both women raised their weapons when they spotted the faint black cloud approaching at an almost leisurely pace. Pharah's heart thudded against her chest, and she rested a finger on the trigger. Time crawled as the cloud drew closer and closer, then—



*"Die."*

Pharah had not engaged Reaper in close combat before, but she had studied Overwatch's records. Grabbing Mercy, she rocketed up, out of reach as the hooded figure unleashed shotgun blasts in every direction. A few slugs brushed harmlessly past her armoured feet, having lost their velocity during the upward climb. In the lull after his preemptive attack, Pharah swooped back in, dropping Mercy before charging straight at Reaper, only to fly through thin air. Cold laughter rang out as he crossed the threshold, entering the base.

"Another Amari ready to throw her life away for Overwatch," Reaper intoned, mask pointed in her direction. "Foolishness runs strong in your blood."

They leveled their guns simultaneously. Two shots rang out, but neither was Reaper's. He turned into a shroud again, and Pharah felt an energy round splash harmlessly across her chest piece. Realisation sunk into her being as she stared straight at Mercy, red blossoming over a white-armoured shoulder.

*Fuck. Fuck!*

Mercy did not share Pharah's panic. The Valkyrie wings lit up and she flew in 76's direction, where Reaper had just materialised. Before he could react, the medic rammed into his side, not stopping until he was pinned against a charred wall. She pushed the caduceus staff against his neck, pressing her blaster against the mask. But she did not fire. As Pharah neared their position, she could hear laughter again, and saw a shotgun being leveled at 76.

The caduceus blaster finally fired, but at the wall in front of Mercy. She sprang to her feet, turning on her heel to face Reaper who reappeared at the entrance.

"Finally willing to kill me, Doctor? You should have—"

An energy round burned into his stomach, cutting him off. Reaper barely winced, merely looking down at the wound as though it was a mild curiosity.

"I brought you back, Gabriel," she said, stepping slowly towards him, blaster aimed squarely at his chest. "So you could have a second chance. And you squandered it."

Shotguns twitched in gloved hands, and Pharah leveled her rifle. But Reaper paid her no attention.

"You are a hypocrite, *Angela*," he spat the name venomously. "All that you do. It is not for the greater good. You do it for the sake of your own vanity. You love it, do you not? Playing god with the lives of mortal men."

Another shot. But Reaper remained standing. Little tendrils of smoke spilled from the bullet wounds.

"Tell me, how is Shimada doing? Does he know he is but a pet project of the great Doctor Ziegler?"

That was the last straw. Pharah squeezed the trigger, sending pulse rounds in Reaper's direction. In the time she took to realise she had missed, Reaper materialised in front of her. Her visor's display went red as the shotgun blast sent her flying backwards, knocking the air out of her lungs. *Playing us all along*, was all she could think before the pain from breathing sent lightning through her chest. The rifle fell from her hand as she landed on the floor, propped up against the Raptora's wings. Her vision blurred as she watched Mercy's figure dance around Reaper's. Pharah willed herself to move, but the weight on her chest started to grow heavier. The pain started to dull.

She fought against the haze in her mind, watching as Tracer joined the fight, drawing fire from the medic. Then a loud, booming voice blasted through the base's speakers.

*"We've regained control!"* Torbjörn sounded ecstatic. *"Defense systems are coming online in 3... 2..."*

Reaper's dark silhouette dissolved into mist yet again, moving quickly out of the entrance as automated turrets came alive and opened fire. The blue light of Tracer's choral accelerator dipped to where 76 sat, while yellow wings glided over to her. Pharah felt herself relax as Mercy's angelic countenance filled her vision.

"Fareeha," she whispered, brushing away the blood dripping from her lips. "Stay with me."

The soothing comfort of the caduceus staff washed over her body, alleviating the pain. Darkness spread from the edges of her vision.

*"Al...ways..."*

She fell unconscious.

## Chapter End Notes

"malak" = angel

# Home

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Fareeha side-stepped a broken piece of metal hanging from the ceiling, carefully avoiding the wires behind it. One would think two weeks' worth of repairs would have at least restored the corridor leading to med bay back to its original condition. But the bulk of their time had been occupied with repairing the power and life support systems, after all the juice had been thrown into activating defenses. So anyone who wanted to pay the doctor a visit had to prove themselves worthy by navigating an obstacle course.

She would start repairs here soon, Fareeha decided. After a few days' rest, the squad was thrown into reconstruction efforts to get the base back into shape. The progress they made was rather impressive, considering that only one engineer was present to direct an entire group of people trained only to blow things up – with the exception of a doctor. Fareeha found herself enjoying the new challenge. It was like trying to navigate a battlefield, except now her enemies took the form of destroyed foundations and wires. And, it left her covered in dirt and the occasional splatter of oil instead of blood. It was a refreshing change, to say the least.

She reached the med bay doors and, since her hands were holding two cups of tea, elbowed the door controls. It slid open to reveal Angela changing Jack's bandages. The doctor glanced at her briefly, nodding as she turned her focus back to Jack.

"Stay here, Fareeha," Angela said when she walked past, heading for the office. "I need to check on your bandages anyway."

She obeyed, setting one cup on the table at the end of an empty bed. Taking a sip of tea, Fareeha settled herself on the bed, watching as Angela secured the bandage around Jack's middle and moved onto his arm.

"You've been overworking yourself, haven't you?" Angela asked. "Both of you," she added when Jack and Fareeha shared questioning glances.

"Not...really?" Fareeha said, hiding behind her cup when Angela shot her a cynical look.

"We'll see," was all the doctor said, going back to work on Jack's arm.

*Uh oh.* Fareeha kept sipping at her tea, hoping against hope that the pulling sensation at her abdomen meant nothing. Angela would not do anything to them, Fareeha knew. But her scary doctor persona was enough to make them think otherwise for a few passing moments.

Jack threw on his top the instant Angela was done. Giving an affirmative grunt at the doctor's advice to take it easy, he tossed Fareeha a glance before walking out of med bay.

*Good luck.*

She smiled. Jack seemed to have forgotten Fareeha had a leg up over the others, when it came to dealing with the doctor. Sometimes two. But she did not think her body was ready for that yet.

When Angela pulled the medical trolley over to her, Fareeha set her cup aside and stripped off her top without being asked. She stayed still as the scanner was passed over her body, keeping her face straight when the device reached her stomach, beeping accusingly. A small patch of blood was growing at the lower left corner.

"*Not really*," Angela mimicked her, shaking her head.

"Have mercy on me, Doctor Ziegler," Fareeha said, unable to keep the smirk off her face.

"You know, I think I liked it better when you were unconscious."

"Really." Fareeha kissed the doctor's cheek as she leaned in, unwrapping her bandages.

"Please, Captain Amari. I'm trying to be professional," Angela said, even though a smile hung on her lips. She tugged the bandage clear from Fareeha's body, revealing the bleeding wound.

Fareeha bit down whatever reply she had, bearing the sting around her wound as it was cleaned methodically. The doctor then examined her back, satisfied with what she saw. It did not take long before fresh bandages were wrapped around her body again. Angela sighed as she cut the cloth, securing it at her side.

"Try not to open your wounds again, Fareeha. You were lucky you only reopened one this time."

The last time, Fareeha tried to carry a load too heavy for her injured body to take. She was bleeding from the front and back when she stepped into med bay, earning a look of utter exasperation from the doctor. This time, she had reached for a control panel across a gap in the floor and nearly fell through.

"I promise," she said. Reaching for Angela's collar, she pulled it aside to examine the dressing on her shoulder, where the pulse round had hit. Fareeha's lips thinned as she worried at the edges of the gauze. It was an accident, she knew. But that did not change the fact that *she* was the one who fired the shot. Fingers under her chin tilted her gaze upwards, cutting off her train of thought.

"Don't," Angela said, reading her mind.

"Just worried, that's all." Fareeha gave her a close-lipped smile. "I hate seeing you hurt." The touch at her chin trailed up along her jaw, until it reached her braids. She felt a light tug as Angela played with the hair ornaments.

"Have you checked in with Athena yet?" the soldier asked, referring to the series of memory tests Angela wanted to take, but could not due to other work duties.

"Yes, last night. Everything is back, one hundred percent."

According to Angela, the explosions in the west wing set off the flood of memories, starting with the destruction of Overwatch's Swiss headquarters. The following swarm of hectic images caused a temporary blackout, and D.Va was forced to carry her away from the west wing, slung between her mech's arms. She came to just in time to hear Jack's second call for Bravo, and Torbjörn's voice coming through the remote radio he had placed in D.Va's mech. It was then that things fell into place, and Mercy took charge of Bravo team. Having all the pieces back seemed to have made it easier for her to deal with them, contrary to their expectations. They gave her context, a proper flow of events, and a definite ending – bringing order back to chaos. Though she still spent time alone in her office, connecting and reconnecting the dots to ensure everything was fine, the doctor was back, to the team's delight.

"You know," Angela said, resting her hands around Fareeha's neck. "I'm a little disappointed."

She stared back at the doctor's mirthful gaze, not comprehending her meaning. "Why?"

"You didn't try anything on me for the past few months." Gentle fingers caressed the back of her

neck, and Fareeha was suddenly aware that she was still clad in her sports bra.

"I did not want to take advantage." She held the sides of Angela's hips as the woman moved closer, blue gaze holding her captive, lips growing dangerously close.

"What if I *wanted* you to take advantage?" Angela murmured, leaning in. She paused when her mouth met empty space, looking up at Fareeha who had moved back with a frown on her face.

"Wait, what?" Fareeha asked. "You mean, you wanted... So you were just...holding back?"

"Yes?" Angela cocked her head to the side. "I was waiting for you to make a move."

"I was waiting for *you* to make a move! I thought you were—, I thought you didn't want to because you didn't remember—"

The rest of her words disappeared against Angela's lips, soft and chaste on hers. Fareeha's eyes fluttered shut as she returned the kiss, then another, and another.

"It doesn't matter," Angela said, breath hot on her skin. "Come to think of it, there's one last test I need you to perform."

"Oh?" The corners of her mouth curved, hands moving to Angela's lower back, pulling her closer. A warm touch trailed from her neck, down her shoulder, raising goosebumps along bare skin. "Tell me what to do."

"I think you already know."

This time, Angela left no room for tenderness. Fareeha did not resist the pull on the back of her neck, meeting the merciless force of Angela's mouth, knowing she fought a losing battle as her lips were sucked, licked, nipped just the way she loved it. Tilting her head to the side, she let Angela deepen the kiss, parting her lips to let a probing tongue through, moaning at its vigorous conquest of her mouth. The small part of her mind that still worked, moved her hand from the doctor's lab coat to under her shirt, sliding up the deliciously soft skin on her back. Angela shivered at the touch, pressing closer to Fareeha, hand moving from the neck and tantalisingly down between her clavicles, driving Fareeha crazy by stopping dead between her breasts. She groaned in frustration, biting at Angela's bottom lip when her tongue retreated, satisfied only when the blonde trapped her in another hungry kiss. Her hands left Angela's back, struggling blindly with the topmost button of her shirt. When she finally popped it open, the hand on her chest pushed backwards, forcing their mouths to part. Then Angela caught the hands on her shirt, tugging them away with some difficulty.

"Not now," Angela panted, cheeks flushed and lips red. Darkened eyes remained on Fareeha as she caught up with the situation.

"No. *No*," Fareeha growled, gripping onto Angela's waist and dragging her closer. "You are not doing this to me."

The grin on her face, though affectionate, might as well have been sadistic where Fareeha was concerned. "I *have* to do this to you, *Liebling*. You need to heal."

"Please?" Fareeha's arms circled around her in a tight embrace, as she peered at the doctor pleadingly. "I need you. I need you so much."

Angela's smile mellowed as she granted a soft kiss, pulling away before Fareeha could make it heated. "Trust me, Fareeha. This is difficult for me too. But you have to heal up first, okay?"

She knew the pout was unbecoming but Fareeha did it anyway, earning a pat on her cheek. Reluctantly, she allowed Angela to pry her arms off, settling for the handhold instead.

"We have all the time in the world, dearest." Angela caressed her cheek. "Do not worry."

Looking back into warm blue eyes, Fareeha let a smile break to the surface. Angela was right. They had the time. They had each other. Their world was righted again. Fareeha nodded, lifting a slim hand to her lips.

"You're evil," Fareeha said. "But I love you."

Angela's laughter tinkled as beautifully as wind chimes.

"And I love you too."

## Chapter End Notes

Drink your goddamn tea, Angela. It's growing cold.

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